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LEGACY: CONCLUSION

EXILES™

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LEGACY – CONCLUSION

PREVIOUSLY



they are the EXILES, real-time-hopping nomads forced to repair the broken chain of time. In each new universe, they must complete a mission before moving on. Their only guide is the mysterious Talus, a bracelet talisman that provides direction, although sometimes oblique, as to what the EXILES are there to rectify. The dangers they face are real. If they cannot repair their own fractured timelines, they may never return home.

Now, the EXILES have found themselves in a world ravaged by plague. In this world, the Earth's mutant and latent mutant population has been devastated by the fatal Legacy Virus. Among the victims is Doug Ramsey, the New Mutant known as CYPHER. When Cypher's teammate and closest friend WARLOCK, the alien cybernetic organism, attempted to bond with Cypher in order to cleanse him of the virus, the result was horrific. Cypher and Warlock became a living virus, aggressive, malicious, powerful beings that could infect anyone. In the process, the entire planet was infected. The mutants of the Earth's population were infected. They are the Vi-Locks. Their numbers include many of the planet's super heroes, known as the PRIMES. The Primes now rule the planet under the command of the former X-Man, FORGE.

The Exiles have arrived and banded together with the last remaining heroes on the planet — the AVENGERS, led by Dr. Henry Pym. To save this reality from the fate of the Vi-Locks, a vaccine must be created from the blood of Cypher, where the virus was born.

To capture Cypher, the Avengers and the EXILES invade the Primes' homebase, MRIN-FRAME, but meet with failure. Forge has discovered their plan. In retaliation, he destroys Cypher and infects the EXILES' leader BLINK with the Vi-Lock virus. Before losing consciousness, Blink is able to teleport herself and the team back to the Avengers compound.

Having failed to capture Cypher, the Tallus has left the EXILES only one solution to stop the army of the Vi-Locks: To destroy the Earth.

Scribe
Judd Winick

Penciler
Jim Calafiore

Inker
Jon Holdredge
with Eric Cannon

Colorist
Transparency
Digital

Letterer
Paul Tutrone

Cover
Mike McKone

Assistant Editor
Nova Ren Suma

Editor
Mike Raicht

Timebroker
Mike Marts

Chief
Joe Quesada

President
Bill Jemas

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AVENGERS HEADQUARTERS INFIRMARY
LAS VEGAS, NEVADA

AAAAMEEEEEEEE!!!

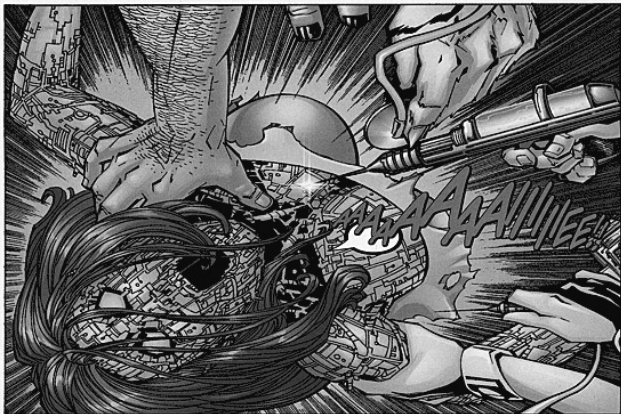
Do something!
Someone do something!

Get her on the transfuser, Beast! Pump four units of immunity stock!

Get her morphine first, Pym, she's in agony.

No! Forge infected her with the virus in its purest form.

We need to stabilize the infection *first* or she'll turn into a *W-Lock*. The morphine will weaken her-- we need her *fighting*!



HOURS LATER...



She's stable, Mimic. We're going to keep transfusing her. The blood with the mutant healing factor will keep it at bay for awhile...

...how long that will last... well... she was hit pretty bad.



Mimic... What *was* she talking about? What did the Tallus say is the next step?



Well, Pym... according to the Tallus, *The Primes* will retaliate for our invasion on MainFrame.

In a month they will launch an all-out attack on the remaining humans on Earth.

Then, they'll be ready for the next step.



Space.



Yeah. They'll go after the rest of the universe next, and they succeed.

A thousand years from now there won't be any other lifeforms in this realm *except* V-Locks.

Natural selection, I guess.



Not according to the Tallus. It says that it's supposed to end *here*. We have to destroy Earth.



Of course, I think that's *crap*. We need to find *some* other--

No, I've been waiting for this.



I knew *some* day... outside of a *miracle*... I knew it would come to this.

We'd have to sacrifice our race for the sake of all others.

It's okay, Mimic, really. I've been planning this for *years*.

ELSEWHERE IN AVENGERS HEADQUARTERS...

I don't think I can *do* this, Morph...

My mother could do it...



You *can* too, Rachel.



Jean Grey was an extraordinary person and the King Kong of psychics. But you've got the *goods*...

...besides... you're our *last* hope.

Thanks... no pressure there.

It just seems so *far-fetched*.



Not where
I come from.
I've played
racquetball
with these
guys!

Well, *more*
like we fought
Doctor Doom, the
Kree army, and a
few hundred other
bad guys... but
they exist.



And if what this planet
needs is **pure blood** with
healing factors to knock
the spark plugs out of these
dirt-bag robot, life-
sucking scum...

Keep repeating the
Incantation. And
visualize where you
want to send it.

...they're
just the
ticket.

If they hear
you... they'll
come.



At
least
I hope
so.

THE AVENGERS WAR ROOM

Two important
factors. *One*--
Mainframe is fueled by
a massive **nuclear**
reactor. The largest
ever created. It lies
fifty miles below
the Earth's
surface.

With the
Vi-Locks, I *assume*,
there is little worry of
mishaps and exposure.
They're living computers,
after all.

There's
never going
to be another
Chernobyl with
them minding
the store.





TWO.

Several years ago, the Primes began stockpiling nuclear armaments. Most likely in fear of humans getting a hold of them.

They haven't dismantled them.

They sit a quarter of a mile away from the reactor.

If we hit the stockpile with our own nukes-- the explosion alone would be devastating. But most importantly, it would blow the reactor's core.



I figure it'll split the Earth in half.

So, what do we hit them with? A missile?

No, Sunfire. The space is too small, and frankly, if the Primes catch wind of what we're doing, they'll just shoot it out of the sky.

We need something that can be maneuvered.

A ship.



The largest vessel we have is the *Warbird*. I've loaded the jet with more than enough fully-armed nuclear bombs to get the job done.

We just need a *pilot* to fly it in and slam into the target.

I'll go.

Like hell, TJ.

Heather, I'm the best pilot.

Doesn't matter. **LOOK**, I hate to seem like I'm protecting my own, but--

--there is **no** reason to think that the Exiles won't **survive** this even if we destroy this whole planet.

As soon as that plane hits its target, this timeline will be set right and the six of us might all teleport out **before** the blast even hits us!

You should send one of *your* people, Pym. Forgive me, but we shouldn't sacrifice *anyone* we don't have to.

Correct me if I'm wrong, Dr. Pym, but since the Vi-Locks took over your world, **none** of you have had much experience in the air.

You're all rusty at best. We get one shot at this--

--I'm the best bet.

Nocturne's right.

TJ...

No. This is *my* call, Sunfire.



I'm going.



I hope you can hear me, Clerice... despite all the sedation... I hope you hear me.

THE INFIRMARY



Because I need you to hear me...
...because...

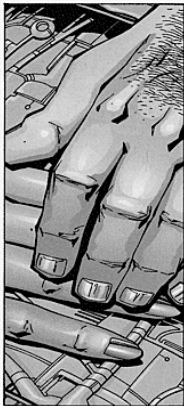


...because I'm so stupid. God... I don't want this to be one of those "I didn't realize how much you meant to me until..." speeches.



It's always one of those emotionally detached idiots who can't see that he's... that he's in love with someone until something terrible happens.





THE WAR ROOM



Alright, TJ, we're a go from here. Don't forget that we can monitor the Warbird's instruments from the War room but all verbal communication has to go through Emma Frost.

The Vi-Locks can detect all radio frequencies outside of Vegas. Combined with Leech's telepathy we'll be able to--

For the millionth time, Pym-- I've got it!



It's not impossible. I used to bullseye wump rats in my T-14 back home...

Last communication before take-off... I'm T-minus thirty-- Mark.



Who--?!

CRACK



Sorry, Nocturne... this is my flight...



BAKBOOM!



I've *lost* contact with TJ... she's... *Leech*, are you reading her on the vessel?

No-- actually-- I've got her--



--in this room!

He *nerve* pinched me! That macho son of a #*% yanked me out of the Warbird!

Who did?!



Almic! Are you there, Rankin? What the hell are you up to?

I'm just making sure my favorite 20-year-old blue-skinned mutant sees 21. I know she's the better flyer, but I've logged more flight time in the Warbird than any of you.

And hell, I've crashed it plenty of times.



Cal... you didn't have to... I was ready to...

I know, kiddo, but I couldn't let you go off to die. I wouldn't be able to live with myself.

Big idiot...



I'm reading clear skies up ahead, fym. Just to be--

Oh-- Pammit to Hell!



Radiation leak! Calvin! We're reading a massive leak from one of the...

Cal?!



He won't
be able to
hear you.

If there was a
radiation leak,
Mimic went into armor
form. He's immune
to radiation in his
armor form...



"...he's never understood why, but
a *psychic barrier* goes up when
he's in armored form. He can't
be read or project thought."

Okay...
looks like I'm
on my own... not
for the first
time.

But...
I suppose it'll
be the *last*...

MEANWHILE...



Heed our
plea... Help us
in our time
of strife...

Oh, great
ones... Heed our
plea... Help us
in our time of
strife...



We hear
you, child.
We will join
you in your
fight--

BEHOLD!

Whoa!



They came! They heard me!

Morph! It worked! They're here!

When the Exiles became imprisoned on the Skrull World, a planet lorded over by the shape-shifting alien warrior race, Morph noticed that among all the heroes of this enslaved planet--

--one very powerful hero was missing.

As was the hero's family.

These worlds that have been desolated by some alteration would probably have been set right with their help.

Oh... ain't you kids a sight for sore eyes...

In many of the realities that they have been forced to visit, Morph's noticed their absence. It's no wonder, really.

Their abilities can't be measured.

For they are the Gods of Asgard.

And they know very few obstacles.

I am Wodenadaeg, Shaper of Yurd and the bender of Orlog. I am the All Father.

I am Odin!

I have brought my kin and offer our aid in these troubled times.

Whether it is to be the might of our Fists, our swords, our cunning...



MOMENTS LATER,
IN THE INFIRMARY...





Contact the Vi-Locks.
Tell them to shoot him down.



It will never be known if Forge and the Primes entirely believed the Avengers.

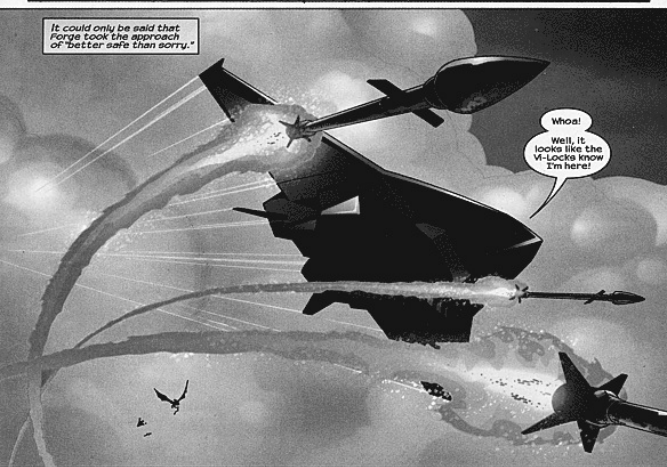


It will never be known if they bought the fact that one of the Avengers would "go rogue" and attempt to destroy the planet in order to rid this universe of the Vi-Locks.

And that they would alert the Primes to aid them in averting the destruction of the planet.



It could only be said that Forge took the approach of "better safe than sorry."



Whos!

Well, it looks like the Vi-Locks know I'm here!



Uh-oh. I'll have to engage the autopilot to make evasive maneuvers against any more incoming projectiles!



Because it looks like I'm going to have my hands full.

Move not, Avenger! Your destruction is inevitable!



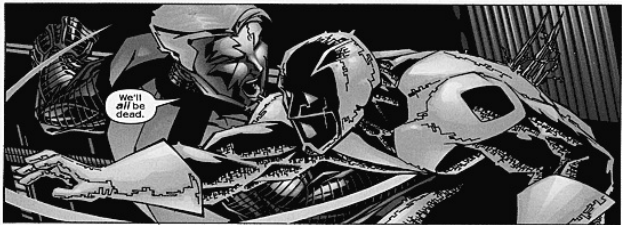
CRREEEEEEE!!

Pardon me if I just don't throw up my hands and surrender!



Y'see... suicide missions don't generally end in giving up!

True enough. But *one* outcome will remain the same!





There it is. That's where Fum said the nuclear stockpile would be.

Just keep it steady, Cal.

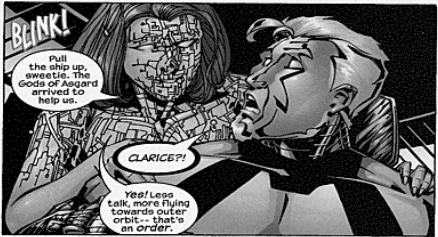


Do your job.

Save the universe.

It's all for the best.

BLINK!



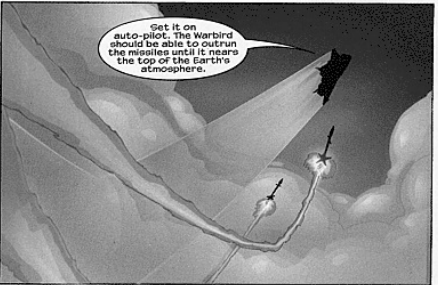
Pull the ship up, sweetie. The Gods of Asgard arrived to help us.

CLARICE?!

Yes! Less talk, more flying towards outer orbit-- that's an order.



Yes, Ma'am!



Set it on auto-pilot. The Warbird should be able to outrun the missiles until it nears the top of the Earth's atmosphere.











END.

REALITY CHECK

Wow! What an issue! It looks like Blink is the one to go! Who would have guessed it? We thought she didn't have a reality to return to! Uh-oh! What does this mean for Blink? What does this mean for our team? And how cool is it that Magik is our new teammate? Argghh! You're going to have to wait two months to find out, because we have a special treat coming your way next month. We've got a couple of announcements to make, so bear with us! But before we get to that, here are some letters...

Dear Reality Check,

After reading issue #21 I have to say EXILES is by far my favorite comic without "Ultimate" on the cover and it ranks right up there with them. The premise is awesome and the storylines are great. Seeing so many alternate versions of so many heroes and villains gives this book a "what if" feel and keeps me coming back for more. I can't wait until the next ish to find out who doesn't make it and exactly how this story ends. Keep up the good work, guys!

Dan Pendleton
(via e-mail)

Dear EXILES People,

After reading the favorable piece on EXILES in this month's *Wizard* magazine, I decided to give it a try. I am a longtime reader of the X-Men books, I'm very familiar with various Marvel histories, and I was a big fan of the "What If?" series, so I thought I'd give this a shot.

Boy, do I enjoy your book! The alternate universes are fun, but I've really been impressed with the characterization and depth in the EXILES. It's also a very fun read. Blink and Morph are my favorite characters, but making Mimic as cool as he is has been fantastic, too.

Congratulations on this success. Please don't cancel this book any time soon. I'm devastated to hear Judd Winick might be leaving the title. Please give it to the right writer because I really think this is one of your very best products. Also, the art has been great, and I hope this book has a strong and productive run.

Good luck and keep up the great work. Those of us who like to read comics just for the pleasure of a diversion sure do appreciate it!

Jack Sullivan
(via e-mail)

Hey Marvel-Men,

What's up with EXILES now that both Mike McKone and Judd Winick might be gone? Is EXILES going to be cancelled? Is there going to be a new creative team? If so, I think that Jim Calafore should be given first crack at the artist post since he has done a hell of a job with his fill-in issues. As for a writer, maybe you should look to someone "in-house" to do it. But, hey, you're the pros. You probably already have this worked out. Best wishes and keep up the great comics.

Rick
(via e-mail)

Thanks to everyone for writing in. Month in and month out EXILES receives a ton of mail, so thanks for caring enough to let us know what you think about this book. We appreciate it. Thanks to *Wizard* magazine, as well, for helping bring some attention to our book! We're psyched everyone is enjoying it as much as we are!

Judd and Mike are gone? While this issue does have the last Mike McKone cover for the foreseeable future, super-pro Judd has written a year's worth of scripts for our time-limited team. That means Judd will continue on as our regular writer. So, no worries. Judd is still in control!

The other announcement we have for this year is that EXILES will be printing more than twelve issues this year. The book's not getting cancelled... it's getting expanded! You readers will get the chance to read 18 issues in 2003. Pretty cool, right?

On top of all that, UNCANNY X-MEN writer Chuck Austen will be coming on board to write a special five-issue story-arc, EXILES 25-29, that will include the moment a lot of you readers have been waiting for... an Exiles visit to the real Marvel Universe continually! And since Mr. UNCANNY X-MEN himself is writing the story, we guarantee a three-issue UNCANNY X-MEN story-arc

starring Wolverine, Iceman, Archangel and other surprise guests! So let your retailers know, because these issues will affect the current UNCANNY X-MEN team and you don't want to miss out on your copy! It will also feature the first adventure of new teammate Magik, and believe us, the story's a doozy! Like we said, this doesn't mean Judd's gone; we just had so many cool EXILES stories to tell we decided to put out more issues for you to enjoy this year! Judd will be back with EXILES #31. We've read his stories already and they rock! We wish we could publish them all at once but that would be cheating, so just sit back and enjoy the ride!

And what may very well turn out to be our biggest announcement is the addition of a new ongoing penciler to our EXILES family. We promise this guy will continue to make EXILES a book to watch, so make sure you give him a warm welcome. (And don't worry, Jim Calafore is still on board. He'll be making his regular appearances throughout the year.) What's the new penciler's name? Well, we can't tell you that yet, but we can tell you he will be penciling all of Chuck Austen's arc and will move on to some of Judd's issues later this year. Check out the sneak peek below of some pages from EXILES #26. We bet you can't wait! Neither can we! More details to come soon!

Wow! Now on to next month. Weapon X, that other reality-hopping group, returns for a solo mission! Judd loved them so much, he wanted to bring them back again and he does it in style! This Weapon X team, led by an alternate reality version of Gambit, is ready to take on any comers to get back to their home realities, and they may just have to take on the baddest of them all... Iron Man! Tell your friends to check out EXILES #23 because it's a great chance to come in fresh and see what all the hype is about. And wait until you see the art by Kev Walker! He's been turning heads on *Legion* and *2000 AD* and now he's bringing his cool gritty style to the EXILES for this special three-issue arc. You're going to love it! This is a three-part story that will be coming out in March and April, so don't miss out!

Nova and Mike



NOVA
REN SUMA
ASSISTANT
EDITOR

MIKE
RAICHT
EDITOR

JOE
QUESADA
CHIEF

REALITY CHECK
10 MARVEL COMICS

10 EAST 40TH STREET, 10TH FLOOR • NEW YORK, NY 10018

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EXILES 23

NEXT ISSUE

"WITH AN IRON FIST" BEGINS! JUDD AND KEV DELIVER A TALE OF TREACHERY AND DECEIT IN 301